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SOCIAL ACTION

VOL. 2 No. 11

FEBRUARY 1953

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HERE AND THERE

The New Cardinal

At certain moments in life human language fails to keep pace with the intensity of thought and emotion. The mind becomes so overcharged with joy and pride, that it remains dumb to outward hearing for lack of the proper terms to convey the depth and the fulness of its experience. Our greetings to the new Cardinal may therefore sound brief and bereft of colour, and we humbly crave pardon for our inability to befittingly record an event of such national significance for the Catholic Church in India. But Dr. Gracias' career has been a splendid outstanding event in the life of Catholic India. The first Indian Archbishop of Bombay, he has now been raised to the pinnacle of being India's first Cardinal. The 'red hat' is the crowning glory of his achievements as an administrator and the highest acknowledgement of his rare qualities of mind and heart that he has selflessly spent in the service of humanity. Every social worker has to rejoice when public recognition of an almost international kind is conferred on a dedicated life of service.

The Sixth International Conference of Social Work

It is not easy to assess the value of so important a conference ; there are too many divergent angles to be caught within the focus of a single observation. For instance, if Mr. Nehru had been present, he would have had cause to groan at the number of fashionable ladies and their more

fashionable saris, skirts and sarongs. A dress designer from Paris might have been more at home in such distinguished company. On the other hand, a polyglot would have been courted to death in that babel of tongues. English of a sort was the chief means of communication, though as an Englishman patiently told me, "We are quite accustomed to hear English being mutilated today," while the Continentals complained that they could not understand English of the American variety.

But despite the general confusion, everyone got on quite happily together. There were endless speeches, some short, some long, some very long. And to give everybody a chance to say something, the afternoon was dedicated to Commissions and Open Discussions, where everyone was free to express his opinion and ventilate his grievances. And all that was said, whether beside or to the point, will be duly recorded in a thick volume.

Results

What were the positive results of all this loquacity? This is a most difficult question to answer, yet the most pertinent. One might admit with a certain reserve that the immediate contact of so many persons of such diverse races, cultures and colour, yet bound together by the common tie of promoting the welfare of humanity was a very important asset in itself. The Conference was no meeting of diplomats, but a union of men and women from all parts of the world bent on uniting their efforts to relieve human misery, suffering and poverty and banish ignorance and fear. And though the stress was much too exclusively on the mere physical plane the purpose in view deserves high commendation and every success. At the Conference one learned of the successful experiments for improving material welfare and human happiness in different parts of the world, and how the more advanced West could help the economically and socially backward East.

Population

Like an unearthly spectre that haunts the graveyard,

the problem of an increasing population was sometimes referred to at the Plenary Session in passing but birth-control was strongly advocated at the special Open Discussion that dealt with the topic. This time however the advocates of birth-control met their match in the strong opposition put up by certain Catholic delegates to the Conference. Thanks to Catholic vigilance, no resolution favouring control of population through contraceptive methods was taken.

Catholic Delegates

Catholic delegates hailing from all corners of the world were happy to meet each other. A common faith, common principles and the desire to spread and expand Christian works of charity and the social doctrine of the Church, held them together, irrespective of caste, race and colour, into a solid phalanx of power for good. It was gratifying to note the important part played by many of the foreign Catholic delegates at the Conference and in its organisation.

Diocesan Delegates

Side by side with the International Conference there took place in Loyola College the meeting of the Diocesan Promoters of Social Work under the leadership of His Grace, Archbishop Attipetty of Verapoly. Though the first of its kind, the meeting more than justified the expectations of its convener. The discussions were concentrated on the problem of how to arouse the social consciousness of various groups of Catholics. Many suggestions for the increase of Catholic social activity were offered and accepted. Much of the success of the meetings was due to the inspiring lead of Dr. Attipetty, who is deeply sympathetic with the underprivileged of both urban and rural areas. Indeed it may safely be said that the advance of the social movement among Catholics in India will depend in the main on the courageous leadership of the Hierarchy. May they guide the big battalions to victory and peace !

A. F.

SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS IN FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION

When, in the course of recent years, UNESCO developed and formulated the concept of Fundamental Education, and planned a worldwide movement for spreading it in the backward areas of the world, India was undoubtedly considered as one of the most important of these backward areas, and as needing such a campaign more urgently than many other countries. India was making a far-reaching experiment in democracy in which the whole world was interested. Her role in international affairs was of an importance which imposed on her electorate a great responsibility. On the other hand her percentage of illiteracy, nearly 80 per cent, was greater than in most other countries. Ignorance and general economic and social backwardness in a country called upon to play, directly and indirectly, a leading part in world affairs, is a source of danger and disequilibrium. Therefore a statement and a discussion regarding Fundamental Education in India could not but be an item in the proceedings of a Social Conference held in India. Hence I feel sure of the interest and sympathy of the audience which is listening to this brief exposé.*

Among those who attempt to define the concept of fundamental education, it has become a commonplace to say that mere literacy is the least of the items in a comprehensive programme, that literacy is but one of the means for that broad understanding of the problems of individual and social life, of that development of technical skills and artistic expression which makes for a fuller life. Fundamental Education aims at an integrated scheme of knowledge and practical ability by which young and old, men and women, are enabled to take their part in the life of their country, and to realise, in however inadequate a manner, their place

* Paper read at a plenary session of the Sixth International Conference of Social Work (Madras).

in the life of humanity as a whole. The socio-economic aspect of a citizen's life is of primary importance in the concept of Fundamental Education. In fact the term "social education" is often used to express what is now technically known as Fundamental Education.

Now it is the great paradox of India, of the spirit of the land, of the traditions and customs that go to make her peculiar way of life, that many, if not most, of the objectives of fundamental education, I mean the integrated view of life and social activity to which I have referred, are shared by the illiterate millions of India to a degree which only those who have lived among them can realise. Of no country can it be said with greater truth that its illiterate peasantry is not an uncultured peasantry. The religious beliefs and social traditions of the people, their concept of an economic system based upon hereditary crafts and inherited skills, the incredible rapidity of oral communication in India, and the frequency of assemblages in temples, at festivals, fairs, and pilgrimages, create in India an atmosphere suitable for the grasp and exchange of ideas. They ensure the permanence of a floating culture in which certain values and standards of judgement, a certain view of life, are accepted and acted upon. This explains among other things, for instance, the fact that our national movement was, in spite of the illiteracy of the masses, a mass movement, a genuinely democratic movement. It explains the success of our recent elections where symbols and not writing were the important factor. After all India is a country where some of the ablest administrators from Akbar to Ranjit Singh did not know to read and write, though they could have easily learnt it; and where thousands of illiterate women have played decisive roles in social and economic matters without the prestige of literary education.

While this peculiar situation by which literacy in India need not be the beginning but rather the rounding off of a process of fundamental education makes the task of fundamental education in some way easier, it makes it more diffi-

cult in another way. Now obviously the notion of fundamental education is inseparable from the notion of life in a community. And the Indian view of life which has ensured for the Indian masses that floating culture with its fundamental values is essentially life in a community. But the difficulty comes from this that the traditional idea or ideal of the community which has been the basis of Indian civilization, namely community based upon race or religion or language or even hereditary craftsmanship, is no longer adequate in a democratic society, nay goes counter to the fundamental exigencies of a national or world democratic order. In the older democratic countries the term "community" is applied to the diverse elements that make up the entire citizenship of a geographical unit. In India the civic element hardly entered into the notion of the community. It was based upon caste or language or race or religion. The task of fundamental education in its democratic aspects would have been easier in India if we had to begin from blank, and write on a *tabula rasa*. But we have to break certain moulds and make new ones without wasting human energy and without destroying human happiness in the process. Perhaps the greatest task before Fundamental Education in India is the formulation and inculcation of the notion of the Community in the sense of a civic unit co-operating for the common good without communal cleavages of the traditional kind.

Along with this widening and humanizing of the idea of citizenship there is another urgent task before the educator, and that is the training of the masses to a realization of the economic needs of India. It is obvious that our democracy will not survive and will not play its role in promoting world peace if economically India continues to be backward and dependent. The grave food crisis through which we have been passing and the impossibility of financing urgent social schemes as long as we have an unfavourable trade balance has focussed the attention of India to the objective of increased production. The traditional economy in which

certain communities did manual work and others lived on inherited incomes or by the so-called learned professions if continued, will spell ruin for India. The need for hard work, even manual work for all, along with the right notion of the dignity of labour, of better methods of agricultural and industrial production, of better health and better nourishment, the need for all this, is felt by every responsible leader in India. It is the task of fundamental education to bring home to the masses the urgency of this total economic rehabilitation.

To what extent has this civic and economic instruction in fundamentals been imparted along with schemes of literacy? What are the significant projects embodying these ideals which India has initiated and carried into execution? Let me say at once that you will not expect me, speaking on behalf of a country of such vastness and complexity, to give the description of any single striking achievement covering a great surface in which the contrast between the before and after would stand out dramatically. In fact I have drawn on your indulgence for this rather lengthy introduction, to show that such realisations are not possible in India. But I shall indicate two or three notable movements which will give a fairly comprehensive view of the Indian effort. In the first place I would refer to the great movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi to popularise Hindi or Hindustani and secure for it the place which he desired in the scheme of national education. The choice of an Indian language as the official or national language of India while regional languages would continue to play their predominant roles in secondary education and the dissemination of that language by voluntary agencies during the past thirty years and more have constituted a capital element in the national and democratic training of the Indian masses. The work of the Hindustani Prachar Sabha of India will rank among the major achievements of fundamental education in India though this may seem a surprising statement to make. Whether it addressed itself to those who were already lite-

rate in some other language, or to those who learnt to read and write for the first time, the movement has affected millions in India. Its effectiveness in helping to create a new socio-political consciousness in India and in fostering the sense of civic unity, has been very great.

Perhaps even more significant from the fundamental point of view is the other movement also associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the concept and the promotion of Basic Education. This notion of education through crafts, through the development of the sense of touch and of the cultivation of physical skills, is one of the most important educational experiments launched in India. It shows at how many points the Father of the country touched the lives of his people, and how little he was inclined to tackle problems without going to their roots. The integral notion of Basic Education as outlined by Mahatma Gandhi and his closest lieutenants, has not been yet implemented in all parts of India. But the spirit of it has been absorbed in the elementary education systems of all provinces and Basic Education centres and training schools have been started by the hundred in this province and in all other provinces of India. In fact because that Fundamental Education is sometimes called Basic Education, *education de base*, the vast official schemes for the promotion of basic education in the Gandhian sense, are sometimes mistaken for schemes of fundamental education in the wider sense which UNESCO has given to it. But there is no doubt that the Indian concept of Basic Education through handcrafts is a revolutionary concept both from the pedagogical point of view and from the point of view of training for citizenship in an economically backward democracy like India. Basic Education Centres and Training Schools for Basic Teachers are being rapidly multiplied, and the entire scheme of compulsory primary education in India for children is being profoundly modified by the concept of Basic Education.

The third Project which I want to describe briefly is the very successful Bombay Social Education Campaign. It is

significant from many points of view. Begun thirteen years ago as a movement for adult literacy it has progressively widened its scope and developed into a social education campaign which brings it into full harmony with the objectives of fundamental education. In fact it is one of the very few Projects in India accepted as Associated Projects by UNESCO. It has been launched and developed by private initiative and for a large part by voluntary workers, and a good deal of its considerable financial outlay has been met by private donations. Its achievements have been impressive. From 1939 to 1952 they have instructed over a quarter million adults through courses lasting four months each, and an almost equal number have benefited by post literacy classes. In the year 1951-1952 about 70,000 received instruction, half of whom were adults who were made literate. Bombay City has 54 per cent literacy now and this compares very favourably with the 32 per cent literacy for the rest of India. But what is capital about the Bombay scheme is that it is not confined to mere literacy but is a comprehensive scheme of fundamental education including instruction in civics, in national history, in geography, in personal hygiene and collective sanitation, in community life and in artistic appreciation and self-expression. All the varied means of instruction are used,—talks, film shows, excursions, dramatic entertainments, ballad singing, etc. It is to the great credit of the Bombay Social Education Committee that they have envisaged their work with a national outlook and enlarged its scope so as to make each teaching centre a real social centre.

This broadening of the scope of their work has been particularly noticeable in the manner in which during recent years the Committee has organized Social Education Weeks in which national leaders like the Prime Minister and Dr. Radhakrishnan have taken part. Separate days were allotted to the study and discussion of various aspects of fundamental education. There was a Civic Day, a Health and Sanitation Day, a Women's Day and a Social Service Day.

It is clear that the extremely influential Committee which has undertaken this immense task of social education in Bombay City has secured the co-operation of almost all voluntary organizations for social service and given to their efforts a scope and intensity worthy of the highest praise. The task before them is still a formidable one. There are over twelve lakhs of illiterates in Bombay City and greater Bombay. It will take them years to liquidate the problem at the rate of progress they are making. But Bombay has resources which are greater than those of other cities and these resources along with the high standard of civic sense which has marked public life in Bombay, give hopes that the work of the Social Education Committee and its devoted band of workers will be carried forward to a successful conclusion.

But while the achievement of a Committee like that of Bombay for the promotion of social education in an urban centre are noteworthy, it remains true that the life of India is in the villages, and that the greatest tasks of fundamental education in India are connected with rural problems and the development of community life in rural centres. Hence I cannot conclude this brief and inadequate survey without referring to what is undoubtedly the most significant social project launched in India next to the heroic efforts to abolish untouchability, I mean the inauguration of the Community Projects on the 2nd of October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. These Projects began in some way several years ago, and its method were applied on a limited scale in the Etawah and Gorakpur Projects, and in the Urban-cum-Rural Project of Faridabad, not to speak of other rural Reconstruction centres like Martandam, the rural centres conducted by the Servants of India Society, and the important rural co-operatives started by the Belgian missionaries in Chota Nagpur. But it is only during the past year that the experience and fruits of all these experiments have been pooled together and a comprehensive scheme of rural reconstruction has been launched. In chosen centres, villages from fifty

to a hundred have been grouped together for purposes of a co-operative community effort to improve sanitation, increase agricultural production, build roads, ensure a good water supply and adequate medical attention, and promote education both among children and adults. The Community Projects envisage nothing less than the total transformation of rural life in India. Its economic aspect should not blind us to the fact that it constitutes the most far-reaching experiment in fundamental education so far initiated in the country. Its success will depend on the quality of the personnel chosen to work out the Projects and the thoroughness of the training given to them. The Ford Foundation is helping to train the personnel ; and the Projects are receiving technical and financial aid under the Point Four Programme of the United States. UNESCO too has in hand the scheme of starting a great Training Centre for the promotion of Fundamental Education. Undoubtedly the UNESCO Centre will play an important part in the working of the Community Projects. Universities in India too will have to play their part in training Community Projects personnel. We may therefore conclude by saying that while significant projects of fundamental education have not been wanting in India, the most significant of all has been but just launched. It is in the successful pursuit of these Community Projects that Fundamental Education will achieve its greatest success in India. It will help not only to eradicate illiteracy among the masses but will enable them to envisage their individual and social activities, their economic and cultural efforts in terms of community welfare, and ultimately to re-establish community life in India on the basis of civic unity and social harmony.

J. D'Souza.

THE WORLD'S CHILDREN

While praising India's monetary contribution to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, Mr. Maurice Pate, the Executive Director of the UNICEF, in New Delhi on January 3rd, drew attention to the fact that now the programmes of the Fund were much larger in India than in any other country of the world. The UNICEF, which is part of the United Nations, was set up by the General Assembly on December 11th, 1946. Member States at this General Assembly more than realised that the whole aim and purpose of the United Nations, as well as the implementing of the Charter would be meaningless unless something was done, and done quickly, to meet the emergency created by the destitution of millions of children in the war devastated countries in Europe. More than this, the vast hosts of children were not only to be won back to life, but they must be rebuilt into happy, free and healthy citizens of tomorrow. This then, was the double mandate given to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund at its creation.

The assistance given by the UNICEF, in the beginning, took the form of feeding millions of children in the war-torn countries of Europe. The break-down of the economic life of these countries meant, not only poverty, unemployment and disease for the adult population, but also long years of malnutrition for millions of the young. Unfortunately, with the end of the shooting-war, the miseries and sufferings of vast populations did not end. In fact, the rise of new political boundaries and the enforcement of political ideologies by some governments led to vast emigration movements and the United Nations was faced with a refugee problem. On the same emergency basis, UNICEF extended its assistance to numbers of children and mothers among the Arab and Jewish refugees in the Palestine area.

As the name indicates, the UNICEF was an "emergency" measure, but that emergency has not ceased to exist. In fact, three years after its establishment, the Executive Board of the organisation began to study what needs of children would continue to require international help, and what other international organisations could meet these needs. This question was fully discussed by the Fund, during the next eighteen months with several United Nations Specialized Agencies, and in particular with the Social Commission and the Economic and Social Council. All member States of the United Nations took part in this discussion, and in December 1950, the General Assembly decided to extend the life of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund for another three years, till the end of 1953, at which time, the General Assembly will again consider the future of the Fund, "with the object of continuing the Fund on a permanent basis". The second conclusion which derived from this debate of the General Assembly was that international help and assistance was essential for children in the under-developed countries of Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. This conclusion was supported by the fact, that whereas, in Europe the post-war emergency feeding of children was vastly reduced due to the rebuilding of dairy herds in the countries of Europe which now had, in some measure, recovered from the ravages of war, in the under-developed countries the low standard of living, the occurrence, within recent times, of natural calamities like drought, famine and earthquakes and the refugee problem tended so to affect the condition of children in these areas as to constitute an emergency. Hence, the resolution of December 1950 replaced the priorities established by the United Nation's General Assembly in 1946. It provided that the UNICEF should use its resources for "the emergency and long range needs of children and their continuing needs particularly in under-developed countries, with a view to strengthening, wherever this may be appro-

priate, the permanent child health and welfare programmes of the countries receiving assistance".

What types of assistance are offered by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund? During its early beginnings in order to meet the serious emergency created in Europe by acute food shortage and child malnutrition the assistance given usually took the shape of milk, clothing and medical supplies. Within recent times, such aid has been given to Palestine refugee children and mothers, Greek refugee children, Korean children and mothers, refugee children in Turkey, and to the victims of drought, famine, earthquakes and floods in Yugoslavia, India, El Salvador and Italy. During 1951 the assistance programme approved by the UNICEF Executive Board has been largely in the form of supplies and equipment for :—

- (a) General maternal and child welfare purposes, including the building and expansion of basic services for children and mothers; the training of child-welfare personnel for maintaining those services, and mass campaigns against diseases, particularly those which affect large numbers of children.
- (b) Child feeding programmes, and related undertaking, such as milk conservation.
- (c) Special groups of people in need on account of emergency situations. In the under-developed countries, and particularly in those which lack medico-technical advancement, the supplies and equipment provided by the UNICEF include : DDT and sprayers, penicillin, tuberculin and BCG vaccine, diphtheria pertussis vaccine and other assorted drugs, chemicals and biologicals; also hypodermic syringes and needles, thermometers, obstetrical and midwifery kits, pediatric, surgical and therapeutic equipment, X-ray units and films and vehicles, including mobile clinics. Moreover, UNICEF provides special imported equipment and plants to help build up the local production of powdered and pasteurized milk,

vaccines, insecticides and antibiotics to be used to bring health and happiness to the millions of children in our under-developed lands.

It is obvious that the assistance-programmes of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, tend to bring that organisation into very close collaboration and connection with several other United Nations Specialized Agencies. Thus, with the steady growth of child-health programmes, the relationship of the UNICEF with the World Health Organisation (WHO) has become increasingly close. This collaboration is affected mainly in two ways. Firstly, any project in the field of health brought to the UNICEF for assistance is subjected to a serious study and examination by the World Health Organization, and before it may be set in operation, it must be pronounced as being technically sound by WHO. Secondly, as the case may be, WHO provides technical advice to countries for such projects, through the Technical Assistance Programme. In this way, most projects in the child-health field for which equipment and assistance are requested from UNICEF, also receive technical assistance from WHO in the form of international personnel. Both the supplies and the right type of personnel are essential to the success of any project, and therefore, a close working arrangement is maintained to secure the smooth co-ordination of international aid. Thus, the First World Health Assembly authorized the establishment of a section on maternal and child-health, and the appointment of an expert advisory committee. In the sphere of active field service, WHO offered all governments, "Demonstrations of health services for mothers and children, preferably in conjunction with demonstrations of general health services or of some other type of special programme, as malaria or tuberculosis control". A similar close collaboration exists between the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) with regard to milk drying and pasteurization. A great part of the world's available milk supply is wasted by

inefficient methods of handling and processing or by failure to make the best use of such nutritionally valuable products as skim milk, and FAO offers its assistance to all governments interested in avoiding this waste, and increasing the quantity and quality of this useful food especially for children. The FAO has worked with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund in Europe by providing technical assistance to governments on improved methods of handling and processing dairy products. In the under-developed countries the need of such technical assistance is of great importance, and the work is being co-ordinated with projects on breeding and feeding of livestock with a view to a general increase in the volume of dairy products.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, as an international co-operative on behalf of children is supported mainly by government contributions on a voluntary basis. More than fifty governments have so contributed, and many of them for a second, third or fourth time. Upto the beginning of November 1951, the resources of UNICEF were the equivalence of slightly over 162 million dollars. This comprised the voluntary contributions or pledges of fifty-five governments, totalling 115 million dollars, the equivalent of some 32 million dollars from UNRRA and 15 million dollars in voluntary donations from private individuals or organisations in over seventy countries and territories, and also other miscellaneous income. At its session in Paris in November 1952, the twenty-six nation Executive Board approved assistance totalling approximately six million dollars for 42 child-aid programmes in 22 countries and territories, in addition to emergency work for Korean and Palestinian child refugees. While the new allocations were primary for long-range operations, 715,000 dollars were appropriated for prefabricated houses made in Yugoslavia, to be used for housing orphan refugee children in Korea, and, also, under the heading emergency aid, a further 524,000 dollars were appropriated for supplementary feeding of Arab refugee mothers and children.

On the completion of its fifth year of operation, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund was able to show a very creditable record. During these five years millions of children in sixty countries have been reached, some over a period of years, with food, clothing and medical aid. Hundreds of maternity child-welfare centres have been established in several economically under-developed countries, and mass campaigns started against age-old diseases largely affecting children—tuberculosis, malaria, yaws, pre-natal syphilis, whooping cough and diphtheria—and a significant start made in training local personnel to carry through national child-care programmes. By the time the approved programmes based on financial aid from UNICEF have been completed in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa, the total will reach approximately 42,000,000 children.

Catholics will note with pride, that fully twelve months before the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund was created, our Holy Father, Pius XII, in his encyclical letter, *On Assuming more eagerly at the present time the care of need children*, (January 6th, 1946) pleaded earnestly on behalf of "a host of innocent children, millions of whom, it is estimated, are in many countries without the necessities of life and are suffering from cold, hunger and disease." In fact, as our Holy Father states, "in every age the Church has exercised the most diligent care of the young and has rightly deemed this as an official mission assigned in a very special way to her charity". In keeping with Catholic tradition and the wishes of the Holy Father, the International Catholic Child Bureau operates in many countries, and in collaboration with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, attempts to build up a healthy, honest and industrious youth who will grow up as citizens remarkable for their probity, fortitude and other mental and physical qualities.

C. C. Clump.

MY RIGHT TO A HOUSE

When discussing the housing problem of this country, we are often appalled by the enormous expenditure involved in suitably lodging 362 million people. In the Draft Outline of the First Five Year Plan, the Planning Commission has tried to face the situation in a brave attempt to satisfy at least the more urgent needs of industrial labour by allocating some 15 crores of rupees to industrial housing. Even then only 25,000 units will be provided every year in the various industrial centres. Besides the financial aspect, however, there is another side to the picture, certainly a more important one. Especially in under-developed areas of the world like ours, people who are accustomed to live without lodgings must somehow be made realise that they need a house, that a house properly built and furnished can be transformed into a home, and that a home is necessary for the mental and cultural development of man. Every human being needs a home.

Shelter

The Sixth International Conference of Social Work held recently at Madras began its sessions by describing man's basic needs. In one of the Open Discussions, in which delegates were allowed to participate, the "Social Aspects of Housing" was the theme for discussion. The participants affirmed definitely that housing was a basic human need. "The need," they maintained, "is primarily for a place of shelter from climatic conditions and protection against peril from wild animals and hostile human beings. This is true for the Eskimo in an igloo and for the African with his hut of mud walls and thatched roof, and even for the moving tent of the Bedouin in the desert, and the wigwam of the Red Indian."

Abode for the Family

But together with shelter, a house is required to provide the family with an abode. It is the place for the birth

and rearing of children. The house has been described often as the 'family nest'. If anything, the simile connotes the warmth and affection that forms so significant a factor of family life. But from this fact flows a very important conclusion. If a house is to be reckoned the family nest, it must provide for the very basic needs of every family. There should ample supplies of water, facilities for cooking, room for storing food and fuel, and efficient conditions for health and sanitation.

Privacy

A family is not merely a union of persons bent on satisfying purely material needs. It is essentially a fellowship, a unity of father, mother and children bound by ties of blood and affection, a nursery in which the finest traditions of the race and culture of the community are handed down from generation to generation. To achieve this purpose, a certain amount of privacy and separation must be attained through the proper construction of buildings. If people are able to look freely into each other's homes so as to observe all that their neighbours are doing, the healthy development of the family is out of the question. In place of modesty and politeness, there will flourish vulgarity of mind and habits, and a lack of that sense of decency that characterises the well-bred.

Property basis

The spiritual functions that are deeply involved in the essential purpose of the family make it necessary for the house to be used and possessed by the family as its own. A certain security of tenure is an absolute essential. It is true that men are acquisitive; that the instinct for possession has brought about many abuses in the past. But on the other hand, the complete denial of this natural potency to possess upsets the balance of essential needs that make family life possible and worthwhile.

Who is to provide ?

But if houses have to be built, who is to build them ? It is interesting to review the history of housing in different countries of the world. In Britain, during the medieval period, the provision of houses was a responsibility of the Lord of the Manor, who granted the land and exacted the labour of his serfs as payment of rent. But the Industrial Revolution led to the desertion of the countryside and the crowding of the cities. The responsibility for building houses was now accepted and undertaken by the factory owner, or the mine owner, or the land owner. Very little thought was given to the manner in which these houses were constructed, nor was any heed paid to the supply of such amenities as the number of rooms, necessary space, water, sanitation. Especially when private enterprise was concerned the aim was to build as many houses as possible on a given area of land.

The result was the slow creation of slums, where people were condemned to live not like men but like beasts. The slums are well known for their over-crowding, their dirt, their utter lack of sanitation, and their unhealthy effects on the minds of their inmates. They seem to be an inevitable consequence of industrialisation all the world over. Together with the slums went the insecurity of the use of the house one lived in. So long as a man was employed by the factory, his house was safe. But if his services were terminated, he and his family were literally thrown on the streets.

Voluntary Association

Not everybody was blind to the sufferings of the factory employees. Individuals, like Canon Barnes and Octavia Hill in England, formed societies to provide people with better houses. Slum areas were bought up, destroyed and new and improved types of houses set up in their place. Co-operative voluntary effort made it possible for people to build and gradually own their own house. But the process

has been a slow one. And the two world wars have only served to aggravate the situation. Not only has there been a suspension of building operations, but the influx of refugees from one country into another, from the towns into the countryside and vice versa, has increased the overcrowding and abnormally affected the rents. In these conditions, the responsibility for providing people with houses falls in a special way on the central government of the country. It is only government that can cope with a situation of such vast proportions. Obviously private and co-operative voluntary enterprise are not to be despised or curtailed, but the main responsibility lies with the government.

All countries

The conclusion that has been arrived at is not peculiar to any single country, but seems to be borne out by the experience of every industrialised nation. Germany and France have passed through the same evolution. In the U.S.A., where private enterprise is keenly encouraged, the people realise that government must step in to assist private effort if the housing problem is to be adequately tackled. Even in the southern states of the U.S.A., where a large number of Negroes have to live in miserable hovels, the central government had come to the assistance of the Tuskegee Institute, which was started by Booker T. Washington for Negro uplift. But despite insistence on governmental intervention, public opinion must be frantically urgent in demanding better houses for all. It was the crusading spirit of the North American 'Abolitionists' who believed deeply in the dignity and the equality of man and therefore forcibly denounced slavery on one man by another, that raised the status of the American Negro and promoted his welfare.

What kind of a house?

It might be difficult to specify the kind of house that would gain universal approbation as being the ideal type, for customs and tastes and traditions vary so greatly from

people to people. But in a general way minimum housing standards for the human family in relation to its needs and potencies can be more easily prescribed. The prevailing deficiencies in regard to housing in slum and backward rural areas are an index of the kind of house people should not be compelled to inhabit. If a house or habitation is to fulfil its function as a home for the family, it must ensure the satisfaction of certain basic conditions.

First and foremost there should be ample room to live and carry on family life. Even this requirement however may vary from place to place. In the tropical zones a larger space may be necessary than in the temperate or the Arctic regions. In India such living space has been specified by the National Housing Commission as 100 sq. feet per person. In other countries the minimum differs. But there is no need to point out how this basic standard is never even in a remote way satisfied in any slum or backward rural area. Overcrowding may never be tolerated.

Other Needs

Effective water supply, easily accessible, good sanitation, separate cooking facilities, separate lavatories, abundant light, especially sunlight, must all be forthcoming as necessary elements for the house of minimum standards to satisfy basic needs. In actual terms, this would imply that the house should contain a living room of the minimum standard size, a kitchenette, a lavatory, windows for light and fresh air, a water tap in the house or in the neighbourhood, place for storing fuel and food, and sufficient space or partitions between houses to ensure privacy. The size of the family will require a corresponding increase in the living space allotted to each family unit. The living room may be a larger one capable of being artificially divided into two. Finally there must be the sense that the house is one's own to use as a home. It must be capable of offering privacy, shelter and protection to all its inmates.

Neighbourhood

While the family is a distinct unit in itself, it is not an absolutely independent unit. It is deeply tied up with the interests of other families in the neighbourhood. It influences and is influenced by them. Congenial surroundings of both a physical and a rational nature help to give the family the sense of the community spirit. Members of the family must learn to be good neighbours and work together with the other members of the neighbourhood for the general welfare of the community. Corporate team-work is necessary within the environs of the neighbourhood. The general planning and the situation of the house plays an important part in determining the success or the failure of this experiment.

Better family life

There is a connection between improved standards of living and the spiritual health of the family. The physical environment does affect the growth of the higher nature of man for better or worse. It was found in England that families that had been transplanted from the slums into more congenial areas improved thereby. Cleanliness, cheerfulness, kindness and sympathy were nurtured and grew apace. In India we face the problem of getting people away from the slums. Even when they are offered better houses, the response is disappointing since the urge for improved conditions lies deeply dormant. In Germany, better housing did not always lead to an improvement in family life. The modern world is too full of the lighter type of amusement that attracts men away from the dreariness and the tedium of an unhappy home. But the general experience seems to warrant the belief that better physical conditions especially for people living in a sub-human material environment bring about better family life. The frustrations of bad housing therefore should be speedily remedied.

Arousing the public conscience

How has the public conscience in regard to better housing been aroused in the past? How has the state come to realise its obligations for housing the citizens in a manner that becomes their human dignity? The process has been a slow one, as the history of housing in the different nations of the world amply testifies. It began with the individual awareness of the sufferings of the homeless. A man felt the need of a house when he had lost one. But in many cases, since his individual resources were limited, he had to submit to his fate and accept any kind of inhuman shelter he could find. But there were individuals in the community who had the sympathy to feel the sufferings of others. These were really the incipient social workers of our own days. Though they may not have been professionals, they were deeply urged by the social sense to relieve human misery and suffering. They were the first to start voluntary co-operative societies to enable people build their own houses on a cheap instalment system.

But with the expansion of the modern world, even their efforts were not sufficient. The modern state, by force of public opinion, has awakened to the task of providing its citizens with better houses, a task which only the state can fulfil. While it is true that most governments have realised and accepted their obligations on this score, little has been done and is being done to relieve the acute insufficiency of housing. The two world wars have only aggravated the situation. In our own country, food occupies the first place. Till India can produce its food in sufficient quantities, the provision of houses must needs hold a place of secondary importance.

The Social Worker

There is one element however that can make up this enforced tardiness on the part of the state, and that is the social worker. It is the social worker who can help people

to transform their houses into real homes, who can help people to undertake the building of cheap houses by inducing them to use their own labour. Self-help even in the trying circumstances of the moment can go a long way to relieve the almost universal distress of a lack of houses. Government obligations however should not impede the citizen from doing his best to improve his own situation as far as he can by his own efforts. To induce the desire to improve must be the main task of the social worker. This is not easy, especially in a country like India, which is bound down by the prejudices, the traditions and the conservatism of centuries. But in Free India there is a new spirit, a desire to learn and improve, a turmoil in the mind of the people looking forward to better things, and it is for the social worker to seize the opportunity and make the best of it. To gain this advantage might call for much sacrifice on the part of the social worker, as for instance, living with the people in the villages ; but no sacrifice can be too great to achieve the consoling promises of the future.

A. Fonseca.

Tainted is every sacrifice that comes of goods ill-gotten ; a mockery, this of sacrifice, that shall win no favour . . . Should the Most High accept the offerings of sinners, (take the gifts of the wrong-doer into His reckoning) and pardon their sins because their sacrifice are many ? Who robs the poor and then brings sacrifice, if of their fellowship that would immolate some innocent child before the eyes of his father. Poor man's bread is poor man's life ; cheat him of it, and thou hast slain him ; sweat of his brow or his life's blood, what matters ? Disappoint the hireling and thou art own brother to a murderer.

Ecclesiasticus, 34.

OUR PUBLIC MORALS

In man's life ethics holds priority over esthetics. Books may be well written, yet be perverse ; poisons may call for the highest technique, they may be most alluring in their warm colouring, they remain poisonous. It is only a modern perversion that sin is clothed in an artistic garb or in what passes as art : it has nearly become a fashion. Peguy once remarked : "They are all that way ; they must have evil and sin to make things interesting. I do not work in sin. I am a sinner but there is not a single sin in my writings". But of course all have not the talent and mental elevation of a Peguy. On the other hand there would be few writers, publishers, producers and sellers of such books, films and pictorials, if there were no buyers, readers and film-goers that crave for a certain type of nourishment. A few of these are bold enough to confess their depravation ; most of them pretend they never see any evil anywhere or at least never feel disturbed in soul. Which, if at all sincere,—is a silly avowal of stupidity or abnormality. It would be a clear sign that they have no intelligence, no imagination, no heart, no will. What would be an ammeter that is not sensitive to any electric current or a thermometer that remains unimpressed by heat or cold ? Just fit for the rubbish heap !

Besides sexually depraved publications, there are cart-loads of books, pictorials and films that betray a morbid insistence on sex matters. *True Romances*, *True Stories*, *True Detectives*, etc., a large slice of the comic and supercomic mass-production, a sizable quota of talkies give sex an importance it has not in normal life and keep public opinion at a low or abnormal level. One must confess that there is a striking contrast between Communist and democratic societies. However materialistic be the mental and moral tone of communist society, it holds little room for sex-preoccupations. The free-love period which followed the Russian revolution was cut short very soon and stringent laws were passed and rigorously applied which tightened

sexual relations. The Red leaders had soon noticed the harm moral laxity was doing to their nation and to their plans. But in democracies the evil is denied or tolerated ; yet they badly suffer from sex-obsession. The French philosopher, Henry Bergson, denounced modern civilisation as being aphrodisiac. In "*Les Deux Sources*", he noted : "The claims of the genetic faculty are imperious but they would soon be tamed if people kept to natural tendencies. Unhappily this sensation which is strong but poor, has been taken as a fundamental note and man has round it created an ever growing number of harmonics ; he has invented such a rich variety of tones that any object struck in any way yields the same tune which has become an obsession. It is an ever recurring appeal to the sexual sense through the medium of imagination".

In a more familiar style, Fr. Kirsch, O.F.M. Cap. has remarked that with some people, whatever be the march of time, it is always *sex o'clock*.

Responsibility for this alarming tone of society is divided and every citizen, parent, and educator should make a sincere assay of his possible share of responsibility. Civil authorities themselves cannot shirk their duties in this matter of social atmosphere ; their minimum task should be to prevent public mentality from being poisoned and to keep out of public reach what is undoubtedly obscene. At times they need the backing of civic opinion to apply the existing legislation. A frequent cause of hesitation for clean-minded citizens to claim legislation and for officials to have recourse to strong measures is the hazy notion they have about what is obscene and what is not. The rules given by Fr. G. Kelly and M. J. d'Anjou may elucidate the point : "Obscene is often used in a vague and broad sense, but for moralists it has a precise technical meaning. Instances will help to make it clear. Let us consider obscene books and plays. For them to be obscene, two elements are required. First their theme must be lustful or naturally arouse sexual passion. Secondly the

treatment of the subject must present lust or sexual passion as attractive. Adultery for instance is sinful lust ; if a book or a play deals with this subject and depicts it as something alluring, that book or play is obscene. In a like manner, excessive nudity and especially the display of a woman undressing in front of a man are normally considered as violently stimulating sexual impulses. Hence when stars are obviously indulging in such provocative scenes, as happens in most of the modern burlesque shows, one is well within undeniable obscenity."

These summary rules, however incomplete, should go some way in clearing notions of citizens and officials. Even the cleanest ideas and ideals will be of little avail unless courage is mustered up to face duty and to brave prejudices and vested interests. Are our officials in modern democracies satisfied that they do justice to their conscience and to society ? And will civic support give them the fillip their goodwill expects ?

A. Lallemand.

It is one of the supreme necessities of our times to watch and to labour to the end that the motion picture be no longer a school of corruption but that it be transformed into an effectual instrument for the education and the elevation of the mind.

And here we record with pleasure that certain governments, in their anxiety about the influence exercised by the cinema in the moral and educational fields, have, with the aid of upright and honest persons, especially fathers and mothers of families, set up reviewing commissions and have constituted other agencies which have to do with motion picture production in an effort to direct the cinema for inspiration to the national works of great poets and writers.

Pius XI.

BOOK NOTES & REVIEWS

L'enfance dans le monde is a quarterly published by International Catholic Child Bureau, and is devoted to the problems of children in all countries.

The present issue contains interesting reports. First a report of the General Assembly of the U.N.O. held last winter which tells of the efforts made on behalf of the Greek and Yugoslav children who are detained in Communist countries, the Italian children who were victims of floods, the children of backward countries who are uneducated, etc. Artificial birth-control was also discussed and met with the most violent opposition from the U.S.S.R. delegate though no resolution was passed. The E.C.O.S.O.C. also treated of child problems in its various commissions.

A summary budget of the U.N.I.C.E.F. indicates the help given to children in many countries and the provisions made for fair distributions to children in Asia, Europe and South America. Other reports and plans are mentioned : the activities of the Paris International Child Centre, the International Conference on public education, etc.

The second part of the issue deals with Catholic thought and effort : the Fourth Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education, the Paris "Carrefour" of the World Congress of lay-apostolate, the First Congress of Teaching Nuns and a news bulletin covering various countries. The periodical covers the subject of child welfare with an unusual breadth of vision and the highest ideal. It measures up to the world-scale which characterises the modern approach to social problems.

In a Pastoral Letter reprinted under the title "Crusade of Thought, Prayer and Action", His Grace the Archbishop of Madras launched a pressing appeal for a renewal of spirit in the actual crisis. The more ominous the signs of world conditions, the more urgent the obligation for Catholics to face their duty and live up to the expectations of Christ.

The outlines include work for ourselves (crusade of sanctification, action, prayer, penance and duty) and work for others (crusade of thought, truth, example, social justice and charity as well as special tasks concerning vocations, elite, youth and family).

After a correct estimate of conditions, needs and resources, a plan for combined action will be possible for the Catholic Action boards. The plan is already outlined in an appendix with detailed suggestions for every age and condition, for every need and opportunity, and it speaks well for the fervour of the Madras Archdiocese that the assigned targets are expected to be reached in three years' time.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has just published the report of the meetings of its Working and Standing Committees for 1952. The Conference has a Standing Committee, a Vigilance Section, and Sections on Education, Catholic Social Action, Church Extension, Seminaries, Catholic Action, Catechetical Instruction. The reports presented by the Chairman of each section make most interesting reading and the questions dealt with by the Standing Committee at its meetings held at Bangalore in October cover vital questions like visas for missionaries, birth-control clinics, marriage laws, educational policy, etc.

The sectional reports reveal a constant care to be objective, though on occasion it is hard to estimate the bearing of the facts as reported ; the Standing Committee shows a business-like activity ; it has even a tone of optimism, as when it sanctioned the printing of 1,500 copies of the report though last year only 446 were sold out of 800.

The Section on Catholic Social Action has possibly the most methodical report. It takes in turn the resolutions passed in October 1949, in January 1951 and in October 1951 and the measures taken to implement them ; a veritable examination of conscience. Much was attempted though some dioceses appear not to be awake to the perils in India's social conditions. Much was done in the line of publicity, even in the matter of organisation, little new was attempted in the

economic field. The report ends with a hope that at the December meeting of Diocesan Directors of Social Action proper steps would be taken to co-ordinate efforts and "bring into being powerful agencies for the purpose". Was the December meeting business-like enough to consider such vital need?

What is distressing about the Social Action Section is the state of its finances, a deficit of Rs. 363 in 1951, of Rs. 244 in 1952. It is high time our public men should realise that there is more security and more profit in investing in Catholic social action than in black pepper or in government securities.

A. Lahuri.

What is Your Social I.Q.? By Rev. William J. Smith, S.J.
The Paulist Press, 401 W. 59th St., New York 19, N.Y. 30 pp.
(No price indicated).

Fr. Smith has done yeoman service in the field of industrial relations with his Crown Heights Labour School; the experience gained there, and in the direction of its Associated Activities, has helped him to produce this little guide-book for effective discussion towards developing the correct Catholic outlook on social questions. After giving some helpful hints for study-club directors and members, the pamphlet proposes a number of practical cases for discussion, each followed by some questions and a number of principles that may be applied in their solution. The cases outlined are more typical of American than of Indian society, as is but natural, yet they will serve to recall parallel problems to our minds, while the questions and principles set down are both interesting and instructive.

J. C. A.

Tribal India Speaks. By E. De Meulder. Patna, Sanjivan Press, 1952. Pp. 194.

Tribal India can speak loud ; though she does not speak her loudest in the present book, there runs a fervid undertone throughout this survey of the economic, social and political conditions of aborigines. If "tribals are India's most trusted citizens" as Sri J. Nehru said in his Manipur speech, and if they are treated as negligible and unworthy sub-humans by some politicians, it is high time their problem and their cause be studied by the general public. The popularity of the "Jharkhand" ideology, though not presently alarming, is a clear symptom of their frustration and of their indomitable will to survive. Let social justice be meted out to them and they will prove one of the most stable and reliable communities in the land.

The author successively reviews the factors of aboriginal life, race, culture, avocations, deficiencies and needs, agrarian, industrial, educational, social and political problems. Occasionally candid, and always fervid, he puts facts and figures in bold relief and pleads the aboriginal cause with the conviction and warmth of one who has worked and suffered for it. He does not tone down the cases of unfairness, exploitation and discrimination which marred the history of aborigines but which failed to break their spirit.

The book mainly refers to the aborigines of Chota-Nagpur and Bihar ; if conditions and policy are what they are where aborigines have made serious advances and are somewhat organised, one is left to dream when guessing what happens elsewhere. The author is not without practical suggestions about remedies and solutions of tribal problems and it is hoped that his book will find an echo in the State legislation.

The book is brightened up with topical photos of aboriginal scenes and heroes ; the get-up brings out the technical qualities of the Sanjivan Press, and the Institute of Social Order did well in giving the book its patronage.

A. Lahuri.

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3. To serve as a centre of information about Catholic social works.

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